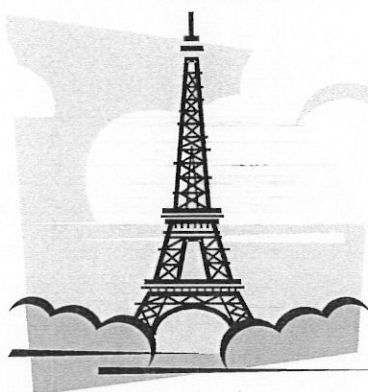


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Lesson 4: Basic Greetings

Bonjour.

LESSON NOTES

In French the phrase "bonjour" can be used as a universal greeting. The first word "bon" means "good". It is followed by "jour", which in French is "day". All together that makes "bonjour" which literally means "good day".

Afterwards, we have the evening greeting which in French is "bonsoir". The first word "bon" means "good", as we saw with "bonjour". It is followed by "soir", which in French is "evening".

Bonjour and Bonsoir are the only greetings you will need on your trip, but there are a couple more that might be useful, if only for knowing what someone is saying to you. For saying hello in a very sweet and endearing way, the French say "coucou." This is reserved for your closest friends and romantic partners, so don't say it to a police officer unless you have personal intentions! When on the phone, everyone answers with "allô", and not "bonjour" or "bonsoir." As we will see in the following quick tip, "bonjour" or "bonsoir" are used to open up conversation while "allô" is more like asking "is someone there?" After one says "allô" on the phone, then you can say "Bonjour" or "Bonsoir". The exchange goes something like this:

The phone rings. PERSON 1 picks it up

PERSON 1: Allô?

PERSON 2: Bonjour, Marc. C'est Julien. (Hello, Marc. It's Julien.)

PERSON 1: Bonjour....

Now the conversation can continue.

VOCABULARY

French	English
Bonjour.	Hello.
bon	good
jour	day
soir	evening
Bonsoir.	Good evening.
bisous	kiss hello

QUICK TIP

When it comes to customer service, the French have earned a reputation for rudeness. But this is due to travelers who have not learned the magic word "Bonjour". To politely get someone's attention, first say "Bonjour," but don't just rush into your question. Wait for the reply "Bonjour". Now the person is all ears and you can ask away. It's the difference between being ignored in a shop, and being served. But remember, after 6 o' clock say "Bonsoir."

This little French custom of saying "Bonjour" or "Bonsoir" to open up conversation is widely overlooked by foreigners, much to French irritation. The "bonjour" or "bonsoir" acts like the question "may I have your attention please," establishing that you recognize the other person as an equal, and not just a source of information that you can order around. The "bonjour" in response acts like "Yes, you may" and establishes the other person recognizes you as an equal. If Bonjour or Bonsoir is not said, it is interpreted as quite rude because it takes away the other person's right to decide whether they want to talk to you or not, and therefore, it does not establish equality. This is doubly true in customer service situations such as shops, restaurants and hotels, where service employees feel their equality with customers must be asserted. It may sound strange to the outsider who may be used to the motto "the customer is always right", but France does not subscribe to that philosophy. If this little custom is upheld, service people almost always respond. If it is overlooked, they can make things quite hard on you.

QUICK TIP 2

When meeting someone in France, one of the first questions a traveler asks him or herself is "do I shake hands or do I do the French "bisous" (kiss hello)"? This is an awkward spot for many a newcomer so don't feel bad if you don't figure it out right away. Here are some guidelines to help you.

Traditionally, the "bisous" is reserved only for social situations:

- in which you are introduced to someone by a third person
- in which you already know the other person, such as a friend, and you are seeing them for the first time that day.

The "bisous" is performed like this: you and the other person touch cheek to cheek, usually starting on the left, and kiss the air. Then again on the other side. The number of kisses depends on the region, but most often it's just two, one for each side.

While women kiss each other hello, there is no strict rule between men, though when they meet for the first time, they often shake hands. If you're not sure what to do, follow the other person's lead. If you are not comfortable with a kiss hello, a handshake always works, especially if you are foreign. The French are quite used to travelers in their country (it's the number one tourist destination in the world!) and adapt this customary greeting easily to newcomers. Lastly, in a professional setting, everyone shakes hands.



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Lesson 5: Parting greetings (Goodbye)

Au revoir.

LESSON NOTES

Customs for greeting and parting are essential in French culture. How you leave things, perhaps more than how you start them, can truly mark the moment. In the following quick tips we will cover some of the varying ways of saying goodbye. If you can't master them all, don't worry. There are way too many to remember. "Au revoir" works fine for any situation.

PHRASES

French	English
Au revoir.	Good bye.
à bientôt	See you soon.
à la prochaine	Until next time.
à plus tard	See you later.
à plus	See ya.
ciao	Bye
à demain	See you tomorrow.
à tout a l'heure	See you later. (today)
à tout de suite	See you very shortly / see you in a minute.
À la semaine prochaine	See you next week.
Bonne journee	Have a good day.
Bon après midi	Have a good afternoon.
Bonne soirée	Have a good evening.
Bonne nuit	Good night.
Bonne fin de journée	Have a good end to your day.
Bonne fin d'après midi	Have a good end to your afternoon.
Bonne fin de soirée	Have a good end to your evening.
Bon travail	Enjoy your work.
Bonne course	Enjoy your shopping.
Bon repas	Have a good meal.
Bonne continuation	All the best.
Bon courage	Best of luck.
Bonne chance	Good luck.

QUICK TIP

In French, one very common way to construct a parting phrase is to start with the article "à" ("until") and follow it with a future moment in time. This ranges from the general to the specific. These are rather perfunctory and can be used in formal and informal contexts, unless otherwise noted. Here is a list of such expressions.

Informal:

a bientôt: see you soon

a la prochaine: until next time

à plus tard : see you later

à plus: literally "until more" which is translated as "see ya"

ciao: bye

Neutral:

à demain: see you tomorrow

à tout a l'heure: see you later (today)

à tout de suite: see you very shortly / see you in a minute.

à _____ : here you put in the exact time, date or period of time you'd like such as "à la semaine prochaine" which is "see you next week".

Formal

à dieu : quite, until God. This is only said when you believe you will never see the person again in this lifetime and is never used except in literature. Only the French would have such a dramatic parting expression.

Again, as with any extra language I give you, this is good to know not so much for future use, but so you know what you hear or read.

QUICK TIP 2

A way to leave things on a more positive note is to wish the other person, or persons, a good day, afternoon, evening, etc.. This is done by starting the phrase with the word "bon" (masculine) or "bonne" (feminine) depending on the gender of the following noun. Then add the time of day or activity that is coming after your departure. As with the other parting phrases, these can be used in formal or informal situations, unless indicated otherwise.

Bonne journee: have a good day

Bon après midi: have a good afternoon

Bonne soirée: have a good evening

Bonne nuit: good night. This is strictly used for saying good bye right before going to bed.

In France, you can get even more precise about the time of day you want to talk about by adding "fin" ("end") to the phrase. "fin" is feminine, so it always takes "bonne"

Bonne fin de journée: have a good end to your day

Bonne fin d'après midi: have a good end to your afternoon

Bonne fin de soirée: have a good end to your evening

You can also specify the activity that the other person is going to engage in following your parting.

Bon travail: enjoy your work

Bonne course: enjoy your shopping

Bon repas: have a good meal

Bon / bonne ____: put in the noun of your choice.

There are other more general well-wishing phrases that you might hear.

Bonne continuation: literally "good continuation" (with whatever it is we talked about) which is translated as "all the best!"

Bon courage: literally "good courage" and translates as "best of luck"

Bonne chance: good luck



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Lesson 10: Apologies(I'm Sorry)

Excusez-moi.

LESSON NOTES

In today's lesson we'll cover phrases used for apologizing. Now, as you haven't quite mastered French it's probably very prudent to go over the phrases for apologizing as they just might come in handy.

We'll start with "pardon".

This phrase is used when you want to get by someone, when you want to apologize for bumping into someone, and when you don't understand what someone says. This phrase is quite common and you will hear it a lot in crowded places like markets and the metro.

Next we'll take a look at: "excusez-moi".

This phrase is also used to get by someone, but is a bit stronger and a bit more forceful without losing any politeness. It is also used to apologize for oneself in a more emphatic way than "pardon." Whereas "pardon" can be said in passing, like "excuse me" in English, "excusez moi" is used to communicate directly ones apology to a particular person. "Excusez moi" be said alone, like "pardon." It always comes before a sentence explaining what you are apologizing for. For example, "Excusez-moi, je ne parle pas Français".

Now, what if someone says "excusez-moi to you?" If someone uses this expression towards you, the proper response is to say the phrase we learned for "you're welcome", which is "Je vous en prie".

As we have seen, apologizing for bumping into people, or needing to get by someone are a daily need. However, there are more specific situations in which apologizing needs a different tone and different words. For example, if you are in an informal situation, say with family and/or friends, and you want to say "excusez-moi", the other person is familiar and so does not need to be addressed with the formal "vous." so you say "excuse-moi", which is the tu form. The following are other situations that call for different phrases.

PHRASES

French

Excusez-moi.

English

Excuse me. (informal « tu » form)

French	English
Bonjour/soir. (wait for reply) Excusez moi de vous déranger, mais j'ai un problème.	Hello. Excuse-me for disturbing you, but I have a problem.
Bonjour/soir, excusez-moi. J'ai un problème	Hello. Excuse me, I have a problem.
Je suis désolé.	I'm sorry.
Je suis vraiment désolé.	I'm really sorry.

QUICK TIP

When traveling, we often find ourselves needing to ask for help from strangers, such as asking directions. In France, this can be tricky as the French have a very particular way of going about asking each other for information when they don't know each other. We studied this problem earlier when we looked at basic greetings. Do you remember the magic word to use to get someone's attention? It's "bonjour" ("bonsoir" past six o' clock). Well, it's also customary to apologize for interrupting someone before you ask your question. Here is a phrase that you can use in almost any situation where you need to do this:

"Bonjour/soir. (wait for reply) Excusez moi de vous déranger, mais j'ai un problème." This means "Hello. Excuse-me for disturbing you, but I have a problem." Then you say your question. This phrase will disarm any French person who you need help from. If it seems too complicated, here is a shorter version that is less fancy, but for a traveler it works great. "Bonjour/soir, excusez-moi. J'ai un problème." which means "Hello. Excuse me, I have a problem."

QUICK TIP 2

So far we learned how to excuse ourselves for slight problems such as not understanding someone, or bumping into someone. What about apologizing for more serious mistakes, like breaking something? For these situations we say "Je suis désolé" which means "I'm sorry." This is used regardless of formality or gender differences. If we want to be more emphatic we can say "Je suis vraiment désolé." which means "I'm really sorry."



Lesson 3: Please (This Please)

S'il vous plaît

LESSON NOTES

In French, "please" is "s'il vous plaît" and is the formal type of the expression. This form is the most common and can be used in any situation in which you feel you need to express respect, such as asking for directions on the street and with shopkeepers. However, there is also a familiar form, "s'il te plaît," used between people who are personally acquainted such as friends and family members. For traveling, this is less useful as you will need language to speak with people you don't know. It would be good to know "s'il te plaît" in any case, so you won't be confused when you hear it, or so you can say please once you make friends!

In French "please" is "s'il vous plaît". The first word "s'il" is actually the contraction of two words, "si" and "il". "Si" means "if", and "il," in this case, means "it". So all together we have "s'il" which means "if it". It is followed by "vous", which in French is "you" or "to you". So to recap here, we have "s'il vous". Literally this means "If it you". This is followed by "plaît" which means "pleases".

So all together we have "s'il vous plaît". Literally this means "if it pleases you".

The most rudimentary way of using "please" is pointing at something while saying "s'il vous plaît", but let's try and build this up a bit, shall we? Let's start with the expression, "This please." which in French is "ça, s'il vous plaît". In English, "this" comes before please. In French the word order is the same. In French the word for "this", "ça", precedes "s'il vous plaît".

Looking at the word for "this", warrants a look at the word for "that" which, for our purposes, is the same word "ça". The phrase "that please" is the same as "this please", "ça, s'il vous plaît".

PHRASES

French

S'il vous plaît

Pardon

Veuillez patienter

Veuillez excuser la gêne occasionnée

S.V.P., respectez la silence

English

Please (formal "vous" form)

Pardon me

Please wait

Please excuse the momentary disturbance.

Please keep quiet.

QUICK TIP

As we have seen, we can use "s'il vous plaît" as a polite way to ask for someone's attention like "excuse me" in English. It can also be a direct way to tell someone you want to get by, also like "excuse me." This is useful in crowded areas such as the metro. Teachers use "s'il vous plaît" to get their classroom to quiet down. Police officers also use it to control crowds. If someone is in your way, you can say "s'il vous plaît" and they will know to move. Another word for "excuse me" that is less forceful but equally polite is "pardon" which is obviously close to the English "pardon me". "Pardon" is generally the better term for when you want to get by as it is less forceful, but the French are not shy about using "s'il vous plaît" to make their point. Thus, "s'il vous plaît" is a term that you may not say as much as you will have said to you.

QUICK TIP 2

"S'il vous plaît" and "s'il te plaît" are not as commonly used as the English "please". For instance in English, announcements and signs would employ "please" where in French they would use "veuillez": the imperative tense of the verb "vouloir" (to want). For example, "veuillez patienter" translates as "please wait" and literally means "want to wait". "Veuillez" is always followed by a verb in infinitive form (verbs with the "er" ending) as in the above example and in the following: "Veuillez excuser la gêne occasionnée" ("Please excuse the momentary disturbance" a phrase you will hear a lot in France.) If "s'il vous plaît" is used on signs, it is often written like this "S.V.P." as in "S.V.P., respectez la silence." ("Please keep quiet" or literally "please respect the silence".) Again, these are not terms you need to use yourself, but you will hear and read them often.



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Lesson 1: Thank You!

Merci!

LESSON NOTES

In French, there is only one word you need for expressing gratitude: "merci." And for emphasis, "merci beaucoup". In either case, there is no situation in which "merci" and "merci beaucoup" are inappropriate. They can be used as often as you like without regard for age difference, gender difference, formality or casualness. However, since there is no other way to express gratitude in speech, "merci" is often said in a mechanical way. We will look at two ways in which to make "merci" more personal.

PHRASES

French	English
Merci beaucoup.	Thank you very much.

VOCABULARY

French	English
Merci.	Thank you. / Thanks
Monsieur	Sir
Madame	Madam

QUICK TIP

As mentioned, you can never say "merci" too much in France. Showing gratitude, especially for newcomers, can be a very successful way to have the French warm up to you. So one way to make "merci" more personal is to use it generously. For instance, in a shop or restaurant, if you ask a question, it is a good idea to make eye contact and say "merci" or "merci beaucoup" at the end of the exchange. This is the same when getting off the bus or out of a taxi, after an exchange with a waiter, or really, anyone. If you make the extra effort to look the person in the eye and say "merci," the person feels acknowledged. It can be refreshing, especially in a culture that can be quite formal and make gratitude somewhat automatic. However, on the flip side, don't be surprised if you don't have as many "merci's" coming back to you—at first.

QUICK TIP 2

Showing gratitude with people you don't know personally is done by adding the word "Monsieur" or "Madame" at the end. For instance, if someone helps you, say a shopkeeper, and you want to show you're appreciation while keeping a distance, say "Merci, monsieur" (Thank you, sir) for a man, and "Merci, madame" (Thank you, madam) for a woman. In fact, you can add "Monsieur" or "Madame" at the end of any address to a stranger to make it ring with more politeness and respect.



Lesson 2: You're Welcome!

Je vous en prie.

LESSON NOTES

In French there are several ways to say "you're welcome," each depending on a particular context. Essentially, for our purposes, there are two categories of context: formal and informal. Each has its own form of the word "you": "tu" (informal) "vous" (formal). First we'll take a look at the informal contexts and then the formal. The difference is quite subtle at times, so if ever in doubt, use the formal.

In French "You're welcome." is "de rien". The first word "de" means "of". It is followed by "rien", which in French is "nothing". So all together we have "de rien". Literally this means "of nothing"

Another way of responding to a phrase of gratitude is "Je vous en prie" which is more formal. The first word "Je" means "I". It is followed by "vous", which in French is the formal "you". So to recap here, we have "Je vous". Literally this means "I you" The next word "en" means "of it". It is followed by "prie", which in French is "pray".

PHRASES

French	English
Je vous en prie.	"You are welcome" or "by all means" (formal)
Je t'en prie.	"You are welcome" (informal "you," but somewhat formal expression)
De rien.	"You're welcome" (informal)
C'est moi.	"The pleasure's mine." (informal, personal)

QUICK TIP

We use "tu" in contexts where we know the person personally and the environment is casual. People of one's own age, classmates, family, and friends are such people. At home, at school, friendly social settings are such contexts. "Tu" is the most common form of "you" that you will hear, so don't feel nervous about using it. In fact, over-use of "vous" can come off as old-fashioned or stuffy. If there is a doubt, start with "vous" and let the other person invite you to use the "tu" form.

To say "you're welcome" in an informal setting, say "de rien". If you feel you want to express this more emphatically, you can use the formal phrase we learned "je vous en prie" and replace the formal, "vous," with the informal "tu" which in this case is "te" (the reflexive form of "tu"). This makes "je t'en prie". This is a more gracious expression than the more common and perfunctory "de rien". Finally, to express "you're welcome" in a sincere and personal way we can say "c'est moi" which literally means "it's me (who gives thanks)" and is similar to "the pleasure is mine." "C'est moi" is considered very touching and authentic, so to use this as a traveler will surely impress.

QUICK TIP 2

We use "vous" when we want to show respect to the other person or when the context requires formality. For instance, when meeting someone for the first time, at a shop, at work, with a professor, or with an older person. However, "vous" is not always required when you meet someone for the first time if the setting is casual, say at a party with people of your own age. Younger people, especially, are using "vous" less and less. They often speak directly in "tu" with each other and even their grandparents. They reserve "vous" for their teachers and bosses. The use of "vous" is not so much a strict rule as it is a way to create a formal distance with others and this is at personal discretion. For instance, one can be on a very friendly basis with the local baker for years and still say "vous". Or two motorists who have a disagreement in the street who may be angry with each other, will still argue in "vous" form to keep a distance.

To say "You're welcome" in a formal setting, say "Je vous en prie", as we have learned. This phrase is very courteous and will work in almost any situation. So to adopt this expression would be as important for travelers as "de rien", if not moreso. It shows good manners and respect, which are imperative in French culture.



Lesson 52: First Encounters

je suis (name)

LESSON NOTES

There is no impression like the first. In today's lesson we'll work on leaving a first impression that will last.

In French "How do you do?" is "Enchanté".

For the next phrase we'll need a name, so I will use mine.

In French "I am Julien" is "Je m'appelle Julien". The first word "Je" means "I", as we have learned in previous lessons. This is followed by "m'appelle", which in French is something like "call myself". So to recap here, we have "je m'appelle". Literally this means "I call myself". The next word "Julien" is my name.

So all together we have "Je m'appelle Julien". Literally this means "I call myself Julien".

And finally, "Nice to meet you." In French this is "Heureux de vous rencontrer". The first word "Heureux" means "happy". It is followed by "de", which in French is "of", as we know, but here functions more like "to". So to recap here, we have "heureux de". Literally this means "happy to". The next word "vous" means "you" as we know as well. Lastly we have "rencontrer" which in French is "to meet".

So all together we have "Heureux de vous rencontrer". Literally this means "Happy to meet you".

These phrases will be the essentials you need to cruise through your first encounters. Here are some more phrases to fill in the conversation a little more.

Another way to say "je m'appelle (name)" is "je suis (name)". The latter is a less common saying, adopted from the anglo-saxon phrasing "I am (name)". After we introduce ourselves, it is also common to say "et vous?" or "and you?" ("et tu?" if for the informal you.) This makes "Je m'appelle (name), et vous?"

Other ways to ask a persons name are :

Comment vous appelez vous ? / What's your name ? (formal you)

Comment t'appelles-tu ? / What's your name ? (informal you)

If we want to ask how someone is doing on a first encounter, we can say:

Comment-allez vous ? / How are you ? (formal you)

Comment vas-tu? / How are you ? (informal you)

Comment ça va ? How is it going ? (informal)

Ça va ? / Doing well? literally "It goes?" (informal)

The "Ç" is pronounced like an "S"

PHRASES

French	English
je suis (name)	I am (name)
et vous, et tu?	And you?
Comment vous appelez vous ? (formal you)	What's your name ?
Comment t'appelles-tu? (informal you)	
Comment-allez vous ? (formal you)	How are you ?
Comment vas-tu? (informal you)	
Comment ça va ?	How is it going ? (informal)
Ça va ?	Doing well? literally "It goes?" (informal)

QUICK TIP

If someone asks you these questions, you can answer accordingly:

Question: Comment-allez vous? / Comment vas-tu?

Response: Bien, merci.

Question: Comment ça va ? / Ça va?

Response : Bien, merci. OR Oui, ça va. OR Oui.

QUICK TIP 2

Now that we have learned to say hello at the first encounter, how do we say goodbye?

To say, "Very pleased to have made your acquaintance" we say "Ravi d'avoir fait votre connaissance."



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Lesson 8: I Don't Understand.

Je ne comprend pas.

LESSON NOTES

Not understanding what you hear when visiting a foreign country is a normal part of the process. So don't be frustrated if you don't understand. The French know that their language is not easy, and they often appreciate seeing a foreigner make a sincere effort to speak it, no matter how incorrect. So if you don't understand, they are likely to be patient if you show you are trying. However, if on the contrary, you show no effort in speaking French and say "je ne comprend pas" as an excuse to speak in English, they may not accept it and continue in French, just to show you what for. It is important to show a respect for the language and customs, as the French are raised to hold them somewhat sacredly. In French "I don't understand" is "Je ne comprend pas".

The first word "Je" means "I". It is followed by "ne", which in French is put before a verb to make it negative, similar to "don't" in English. So to recap here, we have "Je ne". Literally this means "I don't". The next word "comprend" means "understand". It is followed by "pas" which, along with the "ne" completes the negation of the verb.

So all together we have "Je ne comprend pas". Literally this means "I don't understand".

Another short way to express this is to say "comment?" This literally means "how?" and is similar to "I'm sorry?". The person will repeat what they said following this response.

PHRASES

French

Je ne comprend pas.

Je ne parle pas Français.

Non, merci.

English

I do not understand.

I don't speak French.

No thank you.

QUICK TIP

Even though we often do not like not understanding, it can come in handy, for instance, if you won't to be left alone by someone peddling wares or asking for money, as is very common in France. Being that it is the number one tourist destination in the world, clandestine souvenir sellers are there in droves. Sometimes they can be hard to shake, especially since they are often immigrants and speak better English than most French people. To give them a little surprise say "I don't understand. I don't speak French." in French. This combines the two phrases we have recently learned "Je ne comprend pas. Je ne parle pas français."

QUICK TIP 2

Another way to shake off someone in French, is simply to say "Non merci," which means "no thank you". This may prove a more useful phrase in these situations as it is more polite and easier to say.